

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE GOALS OF VETERANS EDUCATE TODAY'S STUDENTS (VETS) DAY

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 60) expressing support for the goals of Veterans Educate Today's Students (VETS) Day, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 60

Whereas the United States has, in the course of its history, fought in many wars and conflicts to defend freedom and protect the interests of the Nation;

Whereas millions of men and women have served the Nation in time of need as members of the Armed Forces;

Whereas the service of veterans has been vital to the Nation, and the sacrifices made by veterans and their families should not be forgotten with the passage of time;

Whereas children throughout the Nation would benefit from programs that provide education about veterans and that instill a patriotic appreciation of the sacrifices made by veterans to defend freedom and to protect the interests of the Nation;

Whereas efforts are being made throughout the Nation to devote November 10, or another date as may be designated, to an event known as Veterans Educate Today's Students Day; and

Whereas schools that participate in Veterans Educate Today's Students Day set aside a portion of the school day for the study, recognition, and appreciation of veterans: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) recognizes the importance of veterans to the United States;

(2) expresses support for the goals of Veterans Educate Today's Students Day;

(3) urges teachers, civic leaders, and veterans to carry out programs that educate children about the service of veterans and the sacrifices made by veterans and their families; and

(4) encourages the people of the United States to participate in local and national activities recognizing Veterans Educate Today's Students Day and other events that foster education about the importance of veterans to the Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Again, I am proud to bring to the floor another motion, another resolution, another action that will help us understand and better appreciate the contributions of our veterans from many wars. I want to thank Congressman FRANK PALLONE from New Jersey, who offers this resolution, and it will recognize our Nation's veterans for their sacrifice to our country.

Currently, brave men and women who are fighting in missions throughout the world, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, do not have an exact avenue to let us know what has occurred or let

us know how to appreciate or spread that appreciation to others in our society. This resolution will provide an avenue to educate our children about the sacrifice our servicemembers and their families are making.

Veterans Educate Today's Students Day will designate November 10 as VETS Day that would call for teachers, civic leaders, and veterans to carry out programs to educate children about the service of our Nation's veterans and their sacrifice. VETS Day is a day students can be taught to appreciate that because of our Nation's veterans we are able to enjoy the many freedoms that we take for granted. VETS Day should be the day we highlight veterans' service, American freedoms and pass on to our children our American ideals. This is why I urge all my colleagues to join me in support of H. Con. Res. 60.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This is a simple resolution, just basically expressing support for the goals of Veterans Educate Today's Students Day, and for other purposes. I believe that in this case it will be November 10, the day before Veterans Day, when this will be celebrated. So obviously we need to support this resolution. It expresses the sense of the support of Congress for the goals of this VETS Day.

It is noticeable that we recognize the importance of educating the children of today about this sacrificial history of veterans and their families so close to the national day of honor for those same veterans, which is on November 11, Veterans Day.

My colleagues, the number of veterans today is not as large as it used to be. The children in schools are less likely to have a parent, uncle or aunt who served in the military who could tell them about their experiences. My father served in Iwo Jima. He could tell me about his experience during that Pacific war. He has since been deceased. But I remember him talking about it and how much education it was for me. So those from the Greatest Generation who have passed from this world leave behind a legacy of courage, loyalty, and honor. This legacy was picked up and continued by the next generation of veterans from the Korean War, the Vietnam War, military engagements in Haiti and Kosovo, Gulf War I, and today in the current conflicts in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

So, Mr. Speaker, to set aside a specific day to educate our children about the sacrifice, the gallantry of our Nation's heroes demonstrates the importance of that service. It is because of them that we still have the freedom in this Chamber and the freedom we cherish today.

Now, some school districts are already taking steps in this direction by inviting veterans to speak in their classrooms on Veterans Day and share their stories with the students and all the teachers. We should encourage this

worthwhile educational activity in more schools across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in support of H. Con. Res. 60.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to yield such time as he may consume to the author of this resolution, a man who fights for veterans in his district and around the Nation, Mr. PALLONE from New Jersey.

Mr. PALLONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach Veterans Day on November 11 of this month, I want to say a few words about why I introduced House Concurrent Resolution 60 which, as you know, expresses support for the goals of Veterans Educate Today's Students Day, or VETS Day.

Throughout our Nation's history, millions of men and women have served the U.S. in times of need as members of the armed services, and these veterans and their families have made sacrifices that should not be forgotten with the passage of time. In the U.S., hundreds of memorials and monuments stand to honor those who have served in the armed services. While these tributes help remind Americans of the great sacrifices that were made to protect our freedoms, they can't educate today's youth the way actual veterans can.

The VETS Day essentially would urge teachers and civic leaders to organize events and forums where students can interact with America's veterans.

H. Con. Res. 60 would encourage schools to set aside a portion of the day in November to allow veterans to answer students' questions while conveying important stories and lessons about their service. I actually have participated in these kinds of programs in my own district, Mr. Speaker; and I know how valuable they can be.

At a time when the men and women of our armed services are in harm's way, we should be educating today's students on the sacrifices these brave men and women make every day. The children of our Nation will benefit from programs that provide education about veterans and instill a patriotic appreciation of the sacrifices made by veterans to defend freedom and protect the interests of our Nation.

Again, I think the most important thing is hearing firsthand accounts from veterans themselves, and that is the best way that students can better understand veterans' service and sacrifice. Again, I want to thank the chairman for his assistance and urge swift passage of this resolution.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by saying that obviously encouraging the people of the United States to participate in local and national activities, recognizing Veterans Educate Today's Students Day, or VETS Day, is something that we should remind all Americans about

how important it is and realize that it not only fosters education of our youth, but it also provides the veterans an opportunity to explain things perhaps that no one has ever asked them or taken the time to say, what was it like? So in a way, it is an opportunity for them, as well as the students.

I urge adoption of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank Mr. PALLONE for authoring this resolution. I know many of us who give speeches on Memorial Day and on Veterans Day note always that there are not many youth in the audience. And to bring these stories to our students, to our youth, is extremely important.

I ask unanimous support of this resolution.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I would also ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in way to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Concurrent Resolution 60.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 60.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 744) recognizing the contributions of Native American veterans and calling upon the President to issue a proclamation urging the people of the United States to observe a day in honor of Native American veterans.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 744

Whereas there are 195,871 Native American veterans in the United States;

Whereas Native Americans have participated for over 200 years in United States military actions;

Whereas the participation of Native Americans in the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the Spanish-America War was significant;

Whereas in World War I, it is estimated that more than 12,000 Native Americans served the United States Armed Forces;

Whereas more than 44,000 Native Americans served in the Armed Forces during World War II, in both the European and Pacific fronts, representing a substantial portion of the 350,000 Native Americans then living in the United States;

Whereas Native Americans fought in the Korean conflict, and more than 42,000 Native Americans fought in the Vietnam War, 90 percent of whom served as volunteers;

Whereas Native Americans also provided significant contributions in the military operations in Grenada and Panama and the Persian Gulf War in 1980s and 1990s; and

Whereas Native Americans should also be recognized for their participation in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom: Now, therefore, be it—

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes all Native American veterans who have served the Nation with honor, pride, devotion, wisdom and strength for serving their country and protecting their homeland; and

(2) calls upon the President to issue a proclamation urging the people of the United States to observe a day honoring Native American veterans with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution to recognize our Native American veterans who have served and continue to serve this Nation with honor and with pride. I represent a county in California, San Diego, that has one of the largest numbers of Native American tribes in our Nation, and I have heard many of their stories. We know that Native Americans have participated with distinction in U.S. military actions for more than 200 years. Their courage, determination, and fighting spirit are well documented throughout our history.

It is well recognized, also, that Native Americans have the highest record of service per capita when compared to other ethnic groups. Presently, there are almost 200,000 Native American military veterans alive today. At least 18,000 of the 22,000 Native Americans currently in uniform have been deployed at least once to Iraq or Afghanistan as of July of this year.

Native Americans who volunteer for military service aspire to uphold their proud cultural tradition. This warrior tradition is a willingness to engage the enemy in battle. This characteristic has been clearly demonstrated by the courageous deeds of our Native Americans in combat. Five Native Americans have been among those soldiers who distinguished themselves by receiving the military's highest award, the Medal of Honor. This medal is given for military heroism "above and beyond the call of duty." These warriors exhibited extraordinary bravery in the face of the enemy and, in two cases, made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

This House, led by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, had the enormous privilege of naming two Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in honor of these heroes just last June. Charles George was a member of the Cherokee tribe

from North Carolina and private first class in Korea when he was killed on November 30 of 1952. During battle, George threw himself upon a grenade and smothered it with his body. In doing so, he sacrificed his own life, but saved the lives of his comrades.

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Ernest Childers was a member of the Creek Tribe from Oklahoma and a First Lieutenant with the 45th Infantry Division. He received a Medal of Honor for heroic action in 1943 when, up against machine gun fire, he and eight men charged the enemy. Although suffering a broken foot in this assault, Childers ordered covering fire and advanced up the hill, single-handedly killing the snipers, silencing two machine gun nests, and capturing an enemy mortar observer.

The warrior tradition is exemplified by strength, honor, pride, devotion and wisdom. These qualities are a perfect fit with our Nation's proud military traditions.

I urge the people of our Nation, I urge the Members of this Congress, to make sure we have a day honoring our proud and brave Native American veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important resolution, H. Res. 744, obviously, recognizing the contributions of Native American veterans is important, and asking the President to issue a proclamation urging the people of the United States to also observe a day of honor for Native American veterans. My colleague from California has talked about this. It's interesting; we recognize the contributions of Native American veterans to our society and, of course, by so doing, we are recognizing their achievements, their singular achievements, if I might add. I compliment the resolution that was introduced by my good friend, the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON), and the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN) for their support and also their prescience for bringing this bill forward.

We have Veterans Day less than a week away, my colleagues. I think it's important this body recognize one often overlooked group of veterans. These veterans have made numerous contributions to the United States military, not just recently in World War II, but as far back as the War of 1812. Currently, there are 195,000 Native American veterans who live in the United States. According to the U.S. Army Center of Military History Web site, there have been 24 Native American Medal of Honor recipients since the Civil War. Let me just repeat that. There have been, according to the U.S. Army Center of Military History Web site, there have been 24 Native American Medal of Honor recipients.

During World War II, we know about the Navajo Code Talkers, whose ranks